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there for 20 minutes and didn't come in and ask for help?" I said that I thought we were supposed to be autonomous and strong. She said "NO - women helping women is where it's at." I felt as if a stone had rolled off my heart. (Since that time I have learned that it is OK to ask for help with your car, but not with your psyche.) "Women helping women" is what the women's movement I joined was about, not only intellectually or physically, but also emotionally. Mary Daly's views seem to deny the value of this kind of support - but I believe we as radical feminists have to change the world so that more, not fewer, women are caretaking and loving and nurturant and so that such behavior is encouraged, not invalidated.

Mary speaks of developing a strong sense of self-worth and the courage to accept one's Self. But why does she assume that these qualities are antithetical to either making self-sacrifices or expecting them from others? That is what sisterhood means. That is why we said "It is not a private problem, but a public issue." That is why we said there is no individual solution. These statements did not refer only to political or intellectual bonding or sparking; they must also refer to helping one another through the horrors of existence day by day and giving each other the courage to keep up the struggle. The ideas fostered by the "human potential" movement (or what I call the growth-space-autonomy people) seem rather heartlessly individualistic, for we are not islands unto ourselves. Has that "narcissism" infiltrated the women's movement? I try to use the power and privilege I have as a resource for other women, and I am anything but "horrified" when it can be so used. Taking care of other women may in the short run be against my self-interest (I don't get enough "work" done), but if, by my doing so, those women can make a contribution to demystifying the world for all women, then in the long run it is self-affirming.

I once said that trying to get nurturance from a man is like trying to get blood from a stone; most men have a trained incapacity to provide it. Feminists, however (except those brought up as sons by their parents), have a nurturant capacity. Some choose not to use it, and in this book they are given a moral rationale for making that choice (I would not have minded a practical rationale so much). To me this amounts to throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Most of us who have been mothers take care-taking for granted. It is not a moral decision to provide nurturance; it is part of life. Breast-feeding is or can be a wonderful experience (it was even good for my figure, since I took in skim and gave out regular), and at one point I was considering becoming a professional wet nurse rather than a sociologist. However, I think it "costs" me less to nurture than it does other people. I feel good after helping someone, while others feel drained. I think this question of individual differences should be added to the analysis.

I maintain that in times of crisis - and we are all going through such times - those of us who can should share more than our ideas with one another. And there are worse things in my world than sacrificing or giving up what one wants (temporarily, at any rate) for our sisters - otherwise, why staff rape lines, health centers, hot lines? Why not become or act like the head of IT&T, but with a correct political analysis? On the Central Square MTA station in Cambridge was the graffiti "Lesbians are strong and brave." While I have nothing against those qualities per se, if that were all I wanted I might as well have a relationship with General Westmoreland. Surely there are other traits to value in women, and it is those traits that I love.

Since it is the feminist poets who get at the essence of the female experience, let me close with some lines from Judy Grahn's *A Woman Is Talking to Death* which express the perspective I have attempted to present:

Have you ever committed any indecent acts with women?

Yes, many. I am guilty of allowing suicidal women to die before my eyes or in my ears or under my hands because I thought I could do nothing, . . . I am guilty of not loving her who needed me; I regret all the women I have not slept with or comforted, . . . These are indecent acts, lacking courage, lacking a certain fire behind the eyes, which is the symbol, the raised fist, the sharing of resources that tells death he will starve for lack of the fat of us, our extra. Yes I have committed acts of indecency with women and most of them were acts of omission. I regret them bitterly.

—Pauline B. Bart
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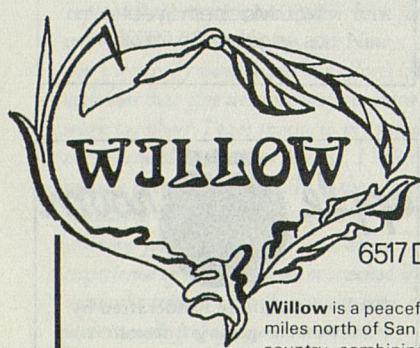
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Dear Chrysalis,

We are writing out of a sense of outrage over the recent Star Wars review by Chellis Glendinning (in Chrysalis No. 6), but more generally out of a desire to open debate on the serious contradiction in the Chrysalis editorial policy for film versus the other arts. Self-described as a "freelance witch" and "media consultant to Chrysalis," Glendinning has contributed two articles on cinema — the recent "Star Wars and the Old Religion" as well as "The Musical Goddess," an earlier piece on Busby Berkeley and Carmen Miranda movies. Both purport to find evidence for a matriarchal interpretation of films widely acknowledged as patriarchal, degrading to women, and fascist — both in structure and theme.

Glendinning's matriarchal interpretation of Star Wars includes such statements as: There is only one major female character in the film because all the other women have left for greener matriarchal pastures in other star systems; Luke's moment of abandoning the technological controls to trust The Force plugs him into the life energy of thousands of (invisible) women located elsewhere in the galaxy; and Princess Leia is in the film because the secret plans are so important they can only be carried by a woman.

It is always attractive to ferret out hidden subtexts in dominant cinema, but even these messages in code must be substantiated by some evidence within the film itself. Neither Glendinning's article nor the accompanying stills offer any proof whatsoever for her misguided theory. The women on other planets are an extra-filmic invention of her own wishful fantasies; no one in the audience and no character in the film can possibly be aware of their existence. Princess Leia functions within the film solely as a powerless "feminine" victim in need of rescue. The very symbol of The Force is not any matriarchal icon, but a clearly phallic beam.

The entire Flash Gordon genre leading up to Star Wars has always been emblematic of U.S. expansionism and this country's policy of foreign conquest. Star Wars (as a lengthy critique demonstrates in Jump Cut #18) is a male fantasy culminating in a proto-fascist victory celebration. It is terribly destructive, and self-destructive, double-think to try to convince

women that films full of the values of dominant patriarchal culture are not what they appear to be. Glendinning performed the same mistaken recuperation on Busby Berkeley's films, although a concurrent issue of *Film Quarterly* offered an alternative and far more accurate analysis by Lucy Fisher of Berkeley's "optical politics." Her analysis, in fact, demonstrates that Berkeley not only carried out an elaborately decorative and exploitive choreography of women – serving his and the public's hunger for "beautiful girls with regular features and well-made bodies" – but, furthermore, reduced the women to mere ciphers of patterns representing such degrading objects as: a violin being bowed!

The Glendinning articles raise several complex issues regarding how film ought to be treated in "a magazine of women's culture." Perhaps *Chrysalis* feels it important to provide coverage of popular film because of its mass entertainment function, even though for other media only women's contributions are included. If that is the case, then it is especially important for the writing to reflect the very real existence in the United States of a developed feminist film criticism. The function of feminist criticism applied to popular films has been, for example, to examine the traditional way that women have functioned in film, both as spectacle for a male audience and as the reinforcement/transmission of sexist behavioral codes. Today the resurgence of so-called "women's films" (Julia, *The Turning Point*, *An Unmarried Woman*) all made by men points up the extent to which Hollywood, applying a post-women's-movement veneer, is offering up the projections of male fantasy as female characters. Certainly there are subtexts in many of these films that offer leverage for alternate receptions by a women's audience committed to our subcultural resistance.

It is extremely important, however, to remain alert to the dominant effect and intent of these films in relation to their mass audience. Analyzing the patriarchal codes in Hollywood cinema, exploring the sexism behind many of the allegedly pro-woman glosses, dissecting the audience traumas that certain types of character-identification produce, and communicating the progressive aspects of other Hollywood films – all could be proper functions of film criticism in *Chrysalis*. Presenting such

films as *Star Wars* or *Footlight Parade* as desirable for women, without any critique whatsoever, is roughly equal to putting Norman Rockwell on the cover (because many women have his art in calendars in their homes) or spotlighting Philip Pearlstein's paintings (for showing the "realism" of women's bodies) while ignoring completely the ideology of their work.

Rather than footnoting Hollywood, it would be more valuable for the building of a woman's culture to pay responsible attention to the vast number of films being made by women working outside the narrow parameters of the dominant film industry – and generally ignored as well by the male critics covering the independent film beat. If women's magazines do not cover women's film culture, then who will? In the United States, such distribution companies as *New Day*, *Iris*, *Moonforce Media*, *Serious Business*, etc., all distribute important work by women filmmakers: for example, the revolutionary humor of Jan Oxenberg's films, which explore societal and cinematic stereotypes of lesbianism. In addition to these companies and collectives, many women are carrying on self-distribution of their films through mailings, word of mouth, and the occasional review (not, as yet, available in *Chrysalis*). One example would be JoAnn Elam's film *Rape*, turned down by distributors but self-distributed by Elam – with tremendous success due to the need for and response to her film by the women's community.

Internationally, there is a lot of exciting work by women directors (gradually winning limited exhibition here) and feminist critics. Thanks to the work of these women in filmmaking and criticism, we now have work addressing such issues as: voyeurism in cinema, the restructuring of narrative conventions, the creation of a non-sexist film language, the reinvention of character, and the taking up of long-taboo topics (bonds between women, mother-daughter relationships, etc.). These films would be more widely known and available if a magazine like *Chrysalis* included them in its attentions to women's culture. As matters now stand, the *Chrysalis* position on film can only be an insult to women filmmakers and women working seriously in the area of feminist criticism.

There has been writing on these subjects. For any *Chrysalis* readers interested in film, we would recommend several journals that one or both of us have taken a part in: (1) the feminist issue of *New German Critique* (#13), featuring a panel discussion among three NGC editors and five feminist critics on the whole issue of women's aesthetics; (2) the feminist issue of *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* (vol. 3, #4), with articles on feminist film theory and women's documentaries; (3) any issue of *Jump Cut*, which frequently publishes feminist film writing and divergent views of Hollywood, and on the editorial board of which we both serve. We recognize that these are not all easily available journals, and we therefore urge *Chrysalis* to reconsider its policy on film and to become active in the process of building a strong women's film culture.

B. Ruby Rich	Michelle Citron
Film critic	Filmmaker
<i>The Chicago Reader</i> , <i>Jump Cut</i>	<i>Parthenogenesis</i> , <i>Daughter Rite</i>

Dear Readers:

In selecting Chellis Glendinning's work for publication, we regarded the two pieces as fantasy collages, not film criticism. We can certainly see how such a misunderstanding developed, however, in the absence of any treatment of film as a part of women's culture in *Chrysalis* – with the one exception of Ruby Rich's article on the films of Yvonne Rainer, published in issue #2. We appreciate your thorough criticism and have already taken measures to remedy our neglect. Film criticism will appear regularly in *Chrysalis* beginning with issue #9, and for the future we plan a catalog of women's film culture.

—The Editors

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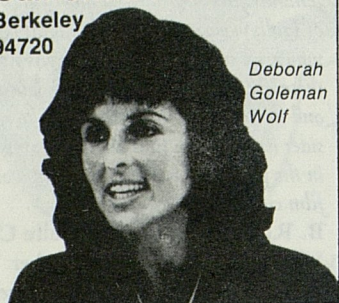
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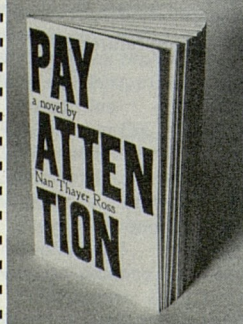
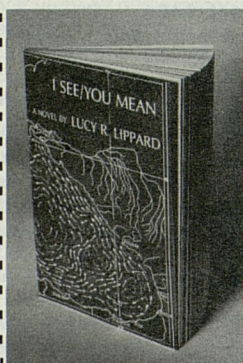
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